



Morning Alert - Monday, September 12, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most networks gave top play to reports that Tokyo Governor Koike will begin a full-scale review of the plan to relocate Tsukiji Fish Market to Toyosu following the finding that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government released false information about safety measures. NTV led with a report that the Hiroshima Toyo Carp clinched its first Central League pennant in 25 years on Saturday. No papers were published this morning due to a press holiday.

INTERNATIONAL

Senior officials of U.S., Japan agree on need to impose “strongest possible” sanctions

All networks reported on Sunday and/or Monday on a meeting at MOFA between visiting Special Representative for North Korea Policy Sung Kim and MOFA Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau chief Kanasugi on Sunday, during which the two officials agreed on the need to impose the “strongest possible” sanctions against North Korea. The officials also reportedly reaffirmed close trilateral cooperation between the U.S., Japan, and South Korea, and strengthened measures against North Korea, including unilateral sanctions. In addition, they agreed to seek a tough resolution that includes new sanctions. NHK quoted Ambassador Kim as telling reporters after the meeting: “In addition to actions in the Security Council, the U.S. and Japan, together with the ROK, will be looking at any unilateral measures as well as bilateral measures, as well as trilateral cooperation.”

UNSC to discuss additional sanctions against North Korea

All Sunday morning papers reported that the UN Security Council unanimously agreed on a press statement on Friday that “strongly condemns” North Korea’s fifth nuclear test, adding that the Security Council is expected to discuss additional sanctions. The papers said while the U.S., Japan, and South Korea are hoping to impose stricter economic sanctions, China remains cautious. Asahi wrote that additional sanctions may include further limiting oil supplies to North Korea and blocking its access to foreign currency, adding, however, that it will be difficult for the U.S. and China to find a middle ground on additional sanctions.

Leaders of U.S., Japan, South Korea agree on need to adopt “significant steps”

All Saturday morning papers gave top play to reports on the DPRK’s fifth nuclear test conducted on Friday, with Nikkei saying that the threat of North Korea possessing nuclear weapons is becoming a reality. Asahi wrote that President Obama released a statement after talking to Prime Minister Abe and South Korean President Park over the phone on Friday, in which he said that they agreed to seek “significant steps,” including new sanctions, against North Korea. In the statement, President Obama condemned North Korea’s nuclear test in the strongest possible terms and stressed that the U.S. will never accept North Korea as a nuclear state.

Japan may strengthen unilateral sanctions against DPRK before UNSC adopts new resolution

Saturday morning’s Yomiuri reported that the GOJ and the ruling parties are planning to swiftly strengthen Japan’s unilateral sanctions against North Korea in the wake of Friday’s nuclear test, adding that if the adoption of a new sanctions resolution against the North at the UNSC takes time, Japan may go ahead and strengthen its unilateral sanctions. The paper added that there is no prospect for the resumption of the Japan-DPRK talks on the abduction issue due to North Korea’s repeated military provocations.

Senior USG official expresses U.S. commitment to defend Japan

Sunday morning’s Sankei reported that visiting Assistant Secretary of State Russel, who met with Defense Minister Inada at the Defense Ministry on Friday, said the U.S. is ready to protect itself as well as Japan using every capability it possesses. The paper said A/S Russel was traveling with President Obama on his Asia tour and decided to accompany Ambassador Kennedy to her meeting with Inada when Air Force One stopped at Yokota AB for refueling. The paper noted that President Obama also told Prime Minister Abe during their phone conversation that the U.S. commitment toward Japan’s security, including extended deterrence, is “unwavering.” The paper wrote that such remarks are aimed at reaffirming the U.S.’s extended deterrence, demonstrating its commitment to defending Japan, and assuaging Japan’s sense of alarm.

U.S. policy of “strategic patience” toward North Korea at standstill

Sunday morning’s Nikkei reported that there is a sense of impasse within the USG following North Korea’s fifth nuclear test, saying that while the Obama administration has been taking a policy of

“strategic patience” toward North Korea, Kim Jong Un has shown no sign of softening his stance. The paper said that since it would be difficult for President Obama to change his policy as he is about to step down, the issue will have to be passed on to the next administration. The paper wrote that North Korea’s goal is to develop missiles that can carry nuclear warheads and target the U.S., adding that there is no doubt that North Korea will continue to pursue nuclear and missile development in order to gain the upper hand in negotiations with the new administration. An expert pointed out that the DPRK will probably succeed in developing missiles that can reach the U.S. within a few years.

Wall Street Journal criticizes President Obama’s Asia strategy

Saturday morning’s Yomiuri reported that the online edition of the Wall Street Journal on Friday criticized the Obama administration’s strategy by saying North Korea’s latest nuclear test shows “a significant weakness” in the so-called Asia pivot policy. The U.S. paper stressed that although USG officials did not expect any significant progress to be made in the threat posed by North Korea, it has worsened during Obama’s presidency.

Former defense chief Ishiba comments on North Korea

Saturday morning’s Asahi reported on comments by former Defense Minister Ishiba regarding North Korea’s latest nuclear test. He told reporters: “The security situation is changing dramatically. We must not be optimistic and think the nation (North Korea) will eventually collapse. We must calmly judge the situation and come up with realistic measures. In view of the upcoming presidential election in the U.S. in November, we cannot expect a dramatic change in the relationship between the U.S. and North Korea under the current Obama administration. I think Kim Jong Un thought it was important to demonstrate his nation’s nuclear ability and delivery capacity regardless of what the next administration in the U.S. is like.”

Antonio Inoki meets with senior member of Workers’ Party of Korea

Sankei reported on Saturday that Upper House member Antonio Inoki, who is currently visiting Pyongyang to promote sports exchange, met with Ri Su Yong, vice chairman of the Workers’ Party of Korea, earlier in the day. The paper said Ri and Inoki may have discussed North Korea’s fifth nuclear test on Friday.

Senators protest President Obama’s pursuit of UNSC resolution against nuclear tests

Saturday morning’s Asahi reported that a group of 33 Republican senators sent a letter to President Obama on Thursday warning the President not to seek a possible UNSC resolution against nuclear weapons tests. The senators said in a letter that if the administration seeks a globally-binding UNSC resolution, they will withhold congressional funding for the CTBT-related budget and warned that the President’s “efforts at the United Nations on this issue are likely to set back any supposed progress on achieving a testing ban.”

SECURITY

DM Inada requests early conclusion of GSOMIA with South Korea

Sunday morning's Yomiuri reported that Defense Minister Inada spoke by phone with her South Korean counterpart Han Min Koo on Saturday and requested an early conclusion of a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) between the two countries. Han reportedly expressed the intention to proceed with discussions on the agreement while gauging public sentiment. The paper wrote that the two defense chiefs also reaffirmed cooperation between Japan, and South Korea as well as among the U.S., Japan, and South Korea on North Korea, including information sharing. Nikkei carried a similar story.

U.S., Japan hold director-general level meeting of Alliance Coordination Mechanism

Sunday morning's Yomiuri reported that the governments of the U.S. and Japan held a director-general level videoconference of the Alliance Coordination Mechanism on Saturday. Senior members of the Defense and Foreign Affairs Ministries and the SDF from the Japanese side, and senior members of the State and Defense Departments, the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, and the USFJ from the U.S. side attended the conference. Noting that meetings of the Alliance Coordination Mechanism, which began operating last November, have not been made public in the past, this meeting was disclosed in order to demonstrate the strong bilateral alliance in the wake of the DPRK's nuclear test.

DM Inada cancels visit to Okinawa

Saturday morning's Yomiuri reported that Defense Minister Inada cancelled her trip to Okinawa scheduled to begin on Sept. 10 in view of North Korea's nuclear test.

Onaga submits request to GOJ for prevention of incidents involving U.S. military

Saturday morning's Yomiuri reported that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga met with Okinawa Governor Onaga at the Kantei on Friday to receive a request from a group of base-hosting municipal governments headed by Onaga. The governor called for the prevention of incidents involving U.S. military service members. Suga reportedly responded by saying the base-hosting burden will be reduced in a tangible manner.

ECONOMY

TPP Minister Ishihara says there will be "no renegotiation"

Saturday morning's Yomiuri reported that TPP Minister Ishihara told reporters on Friday that the governments of Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia confirmed that they will not respond to requests from other nations for renegotiation of the TPP. The paper said these remarks are aimed at keeping the U.S. in check because both presidential candidates have expressed opposition to the TPP.

Three DP presidential candidates express opposition to TPP

Sunday morning's Yomiuri reported that the three candidates running for the Democratic Party presidency gave speeches in Sapporo on Saturday in which they all expressed opposition to the bill to approve the TPP and related legislation. The paper said although the GOJ and the ruling camp are planning to seek the enactment of the TPP bill during the extraordinary Diet session to be convened on Sept. 26, the DP is set to take a confrontational stance.

GOJ announces new council to promote industrial revolution

Saturday morning's Asahi and Yomiuri reported on an announcement by the GOJ on Friday that it will establish a new council tasked with creating a new growth strategy. Asahi wrote that the Future Investment Council will focus on promoting a "fourth industrial revolution" for fields such as artificial intelligence and robotics, and review regulations that inhibit economic growth. The council will be headed by PM Abe, and Toyo University Professor Heizo Takenaka, who spearheaded the Koizumi structural reforms, will be tapped as one of the private sector members. The council's first meeting will be held on Sept. 12.

Kagoshima governor withdraws request to halt operations at Sendai nuclear plant

Saturday morning's Nikkei reported that Kagoshima Governor Mitazono on Friday effectively withdrew his request for Kyushu Electric Power Co. to immediately halt the operations of two reactors at the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant. The paper said the governor welcomed the utility's safety measures.

POLITICS

Nikai expresses caution over conspiracy legislation

Sunday morning's Mainichi reported that LDP Secretary General Nikai expressed a cautious view on enacting a bill to make conspiracy a crime during the extraordinary Diet session. He was quoted as telling reporters in Hanoi on Saturday: "Do we need to immediately enact the bill during this Diet session? I think we have more time." The paper said although Nikai has been optimistic about submitting the bill to the extraordinary Diet session, he did not clarify whether the GOJ will actually submit the bill to the Diet.

Aso becomes longest serving finance minister

Saturday morning's Yomiuri reported that Finance Minister Aso on Friday became the longest serving finance minister under a single cabinet since the end of WWII with 1,354 days in office.

Former LDP Secretary General Kato dies

All Saturday morning papers reported that retired Lower House member Koichi Kato, who served as the Defense Agency chief in the Nakasone cabinet, chief cabinet secretary in the Miyazawa cabinet, and LDP secretary general in the Hashimoto cabinet, died of pneumonia on Friday at the age of 77.

